

# Community Connectors to raise education outcomes



ABORIGINAL Community Connectors aim to increase the number of Aboriginal students completing their HSC by 50% by the year 2023.

The Community Connectors link students and families with local services to re-engage students in their education and improve HSC pathways.

It's important work and is a leading example of what can be achieved when government works effectively with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

The Aboriginal Community Connectors, led by the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO) will be delivered in Tamworth by the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Kamilaroi woman Casey Howard is the community connector in Tamworth and she has strong networks in her community, which has helped her build positive relationships with Aboriginal students and their families.

Ms Howard works with students in Year 10, and stays with them until they complete their Year 12 HSC.

Although educational achievement is an important focus, her work is also woven around the student's connections to their Country, culture and community.

For some students and their families it is the first time some of them have ever



HSC graduate Shauna Haines is the first in her family to complete year 12, with support from Community Connector Casey Howard.

been asked, "What do you need? How can I support you?"

Not only do the students see Ms Howard as a support person and mentor, but they also see her as family, someone whom they trust and respect.

Student Sherri-Anne Sands-Green has a goal to attain her HSC and she wanted

more positive life opportunities. She reached out to Ms Howard after experiencing poor attendance along with multiple suspensions for behaviour.

Ms Howard worked with Sherri-Anne to connect her with services and support, including counselling, physiotherapy and cultural mentoring. Sherri-Anne is now exploring a range of post-school options including policing and childcare.

"I love how open and honest Casey was with me from the start. I felt that I could actually complete my HSC knowing I had her in my corner," she said.

Ms Howard also supported student Shauna Haines who became the first person in her family to complete Year 12 and graduate.

Ms Howard has built supportive relationships with organisations such as the Tamworth Regional Astronomy Club. The club has donated laptops to students and waived membership fees to any student who wanted to join the club.

The Tamworth LALC is adding a cultural richness to the club by working to prepare an astronomy night at Trelawny Station where Uncle Len Waters will teach young people about Aboriginal astronomy.

The Community Connector pilot program, championed by CAPO, the NSW Department of Education and the Premier will continue to support Aboriginal students to realise their educational aspirations.

## Grant to study Cultural Arts



TAFE NSW and Ramsgate RSL have joined forces to offer a new scholarship to eligible Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicants who wish to grow their careers in the booming Cultural Arts sector.

Five scholarships valued at \$1000 each will be offered to applicants who wish to pursue the Certificate III or IV Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts or Certificate IV Photography and Digital Imaging at TAFE NSW Eora.

Ramsgate RSL Commercial Manager Nicole Heinrich said the new scholarship program presented an exciting opportunity for Indigenous students to get a head start in their studies.

"Ramsgate RSL board and management are proud to have teamed up with TAFE NSW Eora to offer an educational scholarship for the local community," said Nicole.

"We understand the importance of education and know this scholarship program will help aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students get a headstart in their careers with formal cultural arts and photography training at TAFE NSW."

Qualifications in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts equip students with the hands-on practical skills that they need to preserve and make meaning of the important history for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through drawing, print making, painting, photography and sculpture, whilst focusing on the importance of understanding their own cultural identity.

For information on how to apply for this scholarship and more, visit [www.tafensw.edu.au](http://www.tafensw.edu.au) or call 131 601.

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